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000 of China, both Sons of Han and aboriginals, to conquer in the fight against the passions which have done so much harm to them all.

541 The Nosu men would readily take to sports. With their splendid little ponies, almost human in their intelligence and responding so readily to the wishes of their riders, one can imagine that polo would be very popular, and horse-racing, without its vice of gambling, would stir the hills far more than the biggest of clan fights or the most promising of raids into Chinese territory. Horse-racing is not unknown in West China, and at one of these equestrian trials a Nosu horse owned by my friend Mr Long easily beat all comers. The prize offered by the official in charge of the Republican Commemoration sports was but a small one, and Mr Long refused it. He merely had his horse decorated with a long piece of red cloth and had it led all around for the spectators to look at. There is one tribe that once a year has a bull-fight among all the bulls of the neighbouring villages. The final conqueror is also decorated with red. This debasing custom missionaries are stopping, with the consent of the people.

533 292 One evening while we were at See-tieh there was a break in our yarning by the fire, caused by the arrival of two singers who were anxious to show the visitors what they could do. Standing awhile outside the door, one of the singers sang:

I am a young man and not clever,
The clouds are coming up over the heavens,
The crows are croaking:
Will there be any fruit on the trees?
My wrist is just made for a golden bracelet.

Being assured that there might be some fruit on the trees—

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i.e. some gratuity to the troubadours—they entered the house. They wore white turbans, with a great horn of cloth sticking out from the side of the head. The chief singer began to sing, moving across the room in slow fashion, and going through various movements of the body as he did so. His actions and song were then repeated by the second singer, who seemed to be a kind of understudy of his leader. The first wore felt socks and straw sandals, the other was barefoot. Each had on the usual dark-coloured cape. They sang about the good old days when they were so rich that they could even chop up pieces of silver to feed their pigs with, and when their master was the richest and best in all the world.

To me the entertainment was a very tame one, but it pleased the others and therefore pleased me. The two singers had a look at my watch, and were startled at the ticking of it. The widow with the gorgeous robes was deeply interested in it and tried to get some of the other women to put it to their ears. They were too afraid to do so. The fear of magic was too strong with them. Their curiosity was more than baffled by their superstitions.

There was one of my movements which excited them very much indeed. When I wished to change the plates in my camera I got under my wadded sleeping quilt. They wondered what in the world I could be doing under that quilt. At last one of the men walked across and felt the quilt. Immediately he had done so he cried out: "He is still there." He evidently thought that I possessed the secret of becoming invisible. If some of them could have been with me a few years ago at the Egyptian Hall, what would they have thought?

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weakened, the army continued its march, and coming later on to the borders of Nosuland, a large band of the hillmen, under the leadership of a famous chief, lay in ambush for them, and in one of the defiles, practically annihilated this branch of the great rebel forces. That wandering army was never again much trouble to the Manchu dynasty. I do not know whether the Manchus were grateful to the Nosu for this signal service. And I have never heard that the famous chief of the hillmen was rewarded. Possibly the large booty which fell to the share of the aboriginals was considered by them sufficient reward for all they had done. After all, it was merely another successful raid they had made, and it was an accident that they had rendered a service to their hereditary enemies.

A number of other oils are also used for lighting purposes. Nearly all of these are now giving place to petroleum, of which large quantities are sold all over the country. In the district where I am living this foreign oil costs about threepence a pound, double the price of the native oils. As we sat around the fire one of the men showed me how to put up the Nosu poke to the left of my hair, and just this simple little thing pleased them very much. Just what the origin of the head horns is one does not know. In Nosuland it is the men who wear the horns. South of the Yangtse, among another tribe, the Flowery Miao, it is the women who wear the exalted horn, as a sign of motherhood. Very occasionally a Miao man may be seen with the horn, but this is rare.

After a few of us had sung some hymns in Nosu and Chinese, one of the men got up and went outside that he might sing to us. His theme was an improvised one and

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533 was about the guest from the land of the sunset and his friend Mr Long.

A door led from the principal room of the house into the strong tower adjoining, and it was into this tower that Ah-ku and her daughters retired for the night. The rest of us settled down as near the fire as we could, and soon forgot everything in the sleep that is common to all the world, Nosu and Chinese, Oriental and Westerner.

/170 cont'd/

L 584 father enters upon negotiations with the girl's father. If the latter's response is favorable, a go-between is sought. He must be an individual who has many children. The go-between is invited to dinner, and during the meal, at which meat and wine are served, he is asked to go to such and such a family to ask for such and such a girl in marriage. He goes there for the evening meal, with one or two pounds of meat and two measures of wine. He makes the proposal, and the next day L [273] he can bring back a favorable answer to the boy's family. They fete him, which is called "drinking the wine of the promise." They wait six months or a year and proceed to the second operation called "drinking the wine of the end of the negotiations." The go-between is again invited to dinner. After the meal he goes to the girl's family, taking along a goat, a pound of salt, and 20 measures of wine. There L [262 231] the goat is killed, and they feast while discussing the conditions of the marriage. After the banquet the go-between returns to announce to the boy's father the conditions, which are nearly always 6 or 7 taels L [301] of silver and flowered shoes or a turban. If the boy's family is rich, more is demanded: silver bracelets, rings, and earrings and eardrops. Two months before the wedding the go-between conducts the ceremony of setting the wedding day. For that he comes first to the boy's home, from where after a family-style meal he goes to the girl's home to set the day of the wedding. He takes a piece of cloth, a liang of sewing thread, two measures of wine. The day before the wedding a friend L of the family takes a 20-pound goat to the girl's home. The morning 585 of the big day the go-between, who has received two measures of wine /171/ and two goat heads for his trouble, takes to the girl's home 6 or 7 ounces of silver, the shoes, etc. He is accompanied by the boy, who upon arriving at the girl's home prostrates himself to his parents-in-law, thanking them for giving their daughter to him. The daughter herself stays in the kitchen; she must not see her fiancé. L Then the family gives a big feast to the guests. The meal is served M in the courtyard under tents. They sing. The old people especially [533] distinguish themselves by their improvisations. (This sung Lo-lo dialogue can very well be compared with the T'ou-jen song of the toilette, p. 59.) What have you put on your daughter's head? Your daughter